



<b>Provisional Mark</b>	<b>90</b>
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## School of Social and Political Science – PG Feedback Form

<b>Course Instance</b>	<b>February 2014</b>
<b>Course Name</b>	<b>Involving Children and Young People in Research &amp; Consultation CPD</b>
<b>Component Name</b>	<b>Blog 1</b>

*Please note that both the comments and the grade remain provisional until ratified by the external Exam Board in May and will be subject to change, moderation and review by our external examiners. This includes whether or not any penalties imposed are upheld.*

<b>Exam number</b>	<b>Student A</b>
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**Overview**

<b>Marking criterion</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Grade A-H (if appropriate)</b>
Critical/conceptual analysis	The discussion is set up extremely well, by pointing to the internal requirements of IPA and then contrasting the article's discussion.	A
Strength/cohesion of argument	A few further considerations could have added to the critical argument, as indicated below. As it stands, the blog makes very sound and pertinent arguments.	A
Use of sources/evidence	The points made are well grounded in the literature cited.	A
Structure & organisation	The blog has a clear structure, with a brief description of the resource and a distinct conclusion. The internal critique might have been slightly tightened in terms of how the argument progressed.	A
Breadth and relevance of reading	Very relevant reading for this topic.	A
Clarity of expression, presentation and referencing	Very clear writing and referencing.	A
Suggestions for future work	This is an excellent blog. This blog meets the task requirement squarely, in critically assessing a relevant resource. It could only be improved by further insightful critique.	A

*Susan Elsley and Kay Tisdall, as course convenors, maintain a file of anonymised assessments with feedbacks for further students to consult. If you would prefer to have your assignment not included within this file, please inform Kay Tisdall [k.tisdall@ed.ac.uk](mailto:k.tisdall@ed.ac.uk).*

## Online Submission 1 - Reflexivity in Research with Children & Young People

The following study demonstrates the importance of reflexivity in the methodology of research and consultation with children:

**Majors, K. (2013) Children's perceptions of their imaginary companions and the purposes they serve: An exploratory study in the United Kingdom. *Childhood* 20(4) Feb 550–565.**

The above study uses a qualitative methodology – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) – to explore perceptions of the imaginary companions of eight school age UK children. The study uses a semi-structured interview technique typical of IPA to explore individual and cross-case themes, relying on the researcher's analytic interpretation. The analytic process arrived at several main themes presented within the study.

It is important to note that IPA provides both an analytic process (Smith & Osborne, 2003) to explore themes within and across interview transcripts, and outlines a reflexive attitude (Finlay, 2009). This latter aspect emphasises that the subjectivity and context of the researcher is inseparably linked to the research itself (Finlay, 2009).

However, in the study under discussion, Majors (2013) has used the analytic process provided by IPA with little consideration to reflexivity and the impact of researcher preconceptions. This is problematic for the methodology of this study.

According to Punch (2002), 'the researcher's own assumptions about the position of children in society affects the methods chosen as well as the interpretation of the data generated' (Punch, 2002: 324).

However, Majors (2013) does not address the difficulty for an adult researcher 'to understand the world from a child's point of view' (Punch, 2002: 325) or demonstrate an appreciation of the 'operationalization of power relations in most research settings which enables adults to have much more freedom to direct the process than children do' (Holland et al., 2010: 363).

The lack of reflexivity also has implications for the ethics of the study, where ethical concerns are focused on obtaining informed consent and child protection (Majors, 2013). However, ethical consideration should also be given to the potential to misrepresent child participants by not attending to the impact of adult perspectives and power contexts:

'If one acknowledges the inseparability of researcher and participant..., the issue of voice (and whose voice) is further complicated. There is no simple resolution to this, except exploration through reflexive techniques which attend to power relations and ethics, reciprocity and responsibility.' (Holland et al., 2010: 371)

In conclusion, a critical assessment of Majors (2013) highlights the importance of reflexive practice in research with children and young people. The methodology in Majors (2013) does not explore researcher reflexivity or examine preconceptions, weakening the analytic process and raising questions about ethical considerations.

Although reflexivity should also apply to qualitative research with adults, there are specific preconceptions that can impact research and consultation with children and young people and researchers therefore have a responsibility to address these through reflexive practice.

## REFERENCES

Finlay, L. (2009) Debating phenomenological research methods. *Phenomenology & Practice* 3 (1) 6–25.

Holland, S., Renold, E., Ross, N.J., & Hillman, A. (2010) Power, agency and participatory agendas: A critical exploration of young people's engagement in participative qualitative research. *Childhood* 17(3) Sept 360–375.

Majors, K. (2013) Children's perceptions of their imaginary companions and the purposes they serve: An exploratory study in the United Kingdom. *Childhood* 20(4) Feb 550–565.

Kay 1/7/14 10:00

**Comment [1]:** You have set up the subsequent critique well.

Kay 1/7/14 10:00

**Comment [2]:** A sound point. There is a discussion in the childhood literature of how possible it is to take a child's point of view – and also reifying the 'child' as if there were a single child and childhood.

Kay 1/7/14 10:01

**Comment [3]:** And would it make any difference if the researchers were children, to your point?

Punch, S. (2002) Research with Children: The Same or Different from Research with Adults? *Childhood* 9(3) Aug 321–341.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2003) Interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*, 51–80.